**Dr. Harouna Souley**

*Niger*

Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world. More than 69 percent of its people live on less than $2 a day and nearly 2,300 Nigerien children under 5 die every day – more than half of them from malnutrition. As a doctor, clinician and physician with Medecin Sans Frontieres, Dr. Harouna Souley knows first-hand the role undernutrition plays in perpetuating the cycle of poverty – and continues to lead the charge to break this cycle and make an impact on the future of Niger.

In 2004, Dr. Souley and a group of colleagues founded Forum Sante Niger (FORSANI) to care for children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Today, 200 employees work with community agents in Nigerien villages to share information and screen for cases of child undernutrition and abandonment.

Since its founding nearly 10 years ago, Dr. Souley, through his work as a physician in nutrition programs, teacher and advocate, has guided FORSANI to a position of national prominence, delivering health and nutritional care to more than 15,000 severely malnourished Nigerien children every year. The impact improved nutrition has on a child is rapid and dramatic. “I remember one woman whose child was unable to move due to severe malnutrition,” he recalls. “Within a few days, the child was much better and could even sit up. The smile on the woman’s face after seeing her child was unforgettable.”

Under Dr. Souley’s leadership, FORSANI has taken a major role in educating other health professionals in the care of malnourished children. The FORSANI-supported nutrition hospital in Niger serves as a training site for young physicians, training more than 60 young doctors in nutrition care in Niger. This model has been replicated in other countries, such as in Chad, where FORSANI trained 100 nurses. Between 2008 and 2013, FORSANI nutritional care/treatment programmes have reached more than 60,000 children, and the recovery rate of these children is above 90 percent.

Dr. Souley also leads the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement in Niger, organizing Nigerien civil society to take an active role in president Issoufou’s “Nigeriens Nourishing Nigeriens” – a national agricultural initiative to help the country cope with food crises. Dr. Souley’s contribution has ensured that national policies include treatment and prevention of malnutrition.

“The evidence shows that it is possible to reduce malnutrition,” says Dr. Souley. “We must set our sights high, and be ambitious. In 10 years, I hope that all countries will have stabilized their undernutrition levels and put the mechanisms in place to reach the 20-year target. It is possible if we try.”